

SENATE FISH AND GAME  
EXHIBIT NO. 1  
DATE 3-29-07  
BILL NO. HB 389

House Bill 389  
March 29, 2007  
Presented by Chris Smith  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Chief of Staff of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

HB 389 directs FWP to request that public lands and public roads remain open during the big game hunting season as necessary to achieve the objectives of our elk management plan. FWP agrees that public hunting access is essential to effective elk management on both public and private land and has no problem with including this provision in statute.

It is important to note, however, that our recommendations may or may not be accepted. A land management agency often bases their decision on more criteria than our elk management needs. For example, the need to keep a road closed to prevent erosion, prevent spread of noxious weeds or to provide secure habitat for federally listed species may over-ride FWP's request to open a road to increase elk harvest.

FWP will continue to work with all landowners, public and private, in an effort to manage elk numbers within objectives set by the commission.

HB 389 also directs the FWP Commission to consider landowner tolerance when deciding to restrict elk hunting on surrounding public land within a particular hunting district. The FWP Commission already considers landowner tolerance, expressed in writing or verbally, when setting population objectives for elk in elk plans as well as when setting seasons and quotas for hunts. We have surveyed landowners through the mail, we talk with landowners at public meetings, in our offices and over coffee in their kitchens and we receive input from landowners via email and letters. Landowners' views are important to the commission and we have no objection to placing a requirement that we continue to consider their tolerance for elk in statute.